

Former US Sen. Malcolm Wallop dies at 78, served with Cheney in powerful Wyoming delegation

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CHEYENNE, Wyo. — Dick Cheney, Alan Simpson and Malcolm Wallop made up Wyoming's three-member congressional delegation in the 1980s, giving the least populated state in the nation some of the greatest political clout in Washington.

Cheney was a young congressman who had served in the Nixon and Ford administrations. Simpson was quickly becoming a rising leader in the Republican Party and in the Senate. And Wallop was the senior member of the delegation, a leading conservative voice during the Reagan era in fighting for space defense and a tough anti-communist policy in Central America.

Wallop died Wednesday at the age of 78 at his ranch in Wyoming, and his passing prompted an outpouring of remembrances from his former colleagues who recalled his devotion to conservative causes, foreign policy and Wyoming. Cheney fondly recalled a picture in his new book that shows him, Wallop, Simpson and President Reagan together — a clear sign of the influence the trio of Wyoming politicians wielded at the time.

“Malcolm was sort of the spark plug, he was the senior guy, and Al and I were delighted to work with him,” Cheney said in a telephone interview from Florida. “My record and Malcolm’s record were pretty similar in terms of how we voted on the issues.”

“It was said that was the most powerful delegation pound for pound in Washington,” Simpson said. “And I’m sure we didn’t let it go to our heads.”

Wallop served in the Senate from 1977 to 1995 and had an unusual resume for a western politician. He was part of the third generation of a Wyoming pioneer family, he was born in New York City, he graduated from Yale University, and his grandfather served in the British House of Lords.

His 18 years in the Senate included time as the ranking Republican on the Energy and Natural Resources and Armed Services committees.

Wallop gained a significant victory when Reagan began pushing the spaced-based anti-missile defense concept. Wallop was among a group of conservatives who had espoused the plan for years before Reagan came to support it.

Key legislation Wallop helped pass included an energy bill in 1992 and major portions of Reagan’s tax cuts in 1981. In 1984, Wallop helped create the Wallop-Breaux Trust Fund, an account used to finance state fisheries and boating programs. The fund uses money raised through special fees and taxes on fishing gear and motorboat fuels.

Wallop’s campaign style caused amusement in the state but won him elections. When he first ran for the Senate, he ridiculed federal regulations in political advertisements by showing a cowboy riding across the range with a portable toilet on top of a pack horse.

Wallop didn’t seek re-election in 1994, but remained active politically as director of the conservative Frontiers of

Freedom Foundation think tank.

“His annual red tape award was perhaps the least coveted honor in Washington, but it was just one of the many things that secured his place as a leader among the conservatives of his day,” Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said in a statement.

In 2000, Wallop’s wife, French Wallop, filed for divorce after 18 years of marriage. The U.S. Supreme Court in 2004 allowed Malcolm Wallop to keep his family ranch, then valued at \$4.6 million. He was married four times in all.

Wallop was born Feb. 27, 1933 in New York City — his rancher parents were there for only a brief time — and attended Big Horn School and Cate School, a private boarding school in Carpinteria, Calif. He graduated from Yale in 1954.

Wallop served in the U.S. Army from 1954 to 1957 and returned to Wyoming to ranch.

He served two terms in the Wyoming House, from 1969 to 1972, and was elected to the Wyoming Senate after that. He ran for Wyoming governor in 1974, losing in the Republican primary.

Simpson said Wallop was a highly “principled politician.”

“I never saw him go back on his word,” he said. “It was a joy to debate with him, more fun being on his side I’ll tell you that than it was on the other side.”

“He was a very dear friend,” Simpson added. “And he was a man of great passion and principle and guts. ... Wyoming guts.”

His Senate tenure included several prominent assignments. He was chairman of the Select Committee On Ethics from 1981 to 1983 during the trial of New Jersey Democrat Harrison A. Williams Jr. on Abscam bribery charges. Wallop was the first non-lawyer to serve on the Judiciary Committee.

He is survived by his wife, Isabel, and four children.

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